

ers? If for nothing more than lending credibility to their actions should they become involved in litigation, would obviously be a strong enticement. But what *OTHER* reasons can there be for certification?

Just to name a few: provide a constant training path for the fire service, commitment to ongoing training and learning, motivate individual firefighters and departments, recognize professionalism concerning highly specialized skills and a reputation for quality service, the ability to document performance and competency, and last but not least, *MONEY*.

The financial aspect always seems to come to bear at some point in time; either from the department seeking additional funding, or the firefighter seeking pay increases. Money doesn't talk: it *SCREAMS*. The fact that you have obtained official certification as an airport firefighter makes you more marketable. Simply put, you're worth more money. After all, you have already *PROVEN YOURSELF CAPABLE*.

While we are on the subject of money, let's go to my theory on why the FAA doesn't certify airport firefighters. Everyone, including the FAA, is strapped for money.

Certification of firefighters by the FAA would cost additional money. There would be additional personnel to be hired, with benefits and salaries paid out to those additional employees. Even if there were only a small number of new employees, say five to ten firefighter certification examiners, there would be the always present cost of doing business. Office space, records keeping, computers, travel expenses, and so on. Let's face it, certification by a government agency cost, *MONEY*, a lot of money. So, why take on this task themselves when there are al-

ready several others that will? Of course, we could offer this same argument concerning FAA licensing of pilots and mechanics. Perhaps this is an area that needs further research done, but for now I will get off my soapbox, at least on this point.

Now, let's say you located an agency that offers airport firefighter certification. Don't assume that just because you obtained this certification from 'po-dunk school of firefighting' that everyone will recognize it. Schools of higher learning, A.K.A. colleges don't even accept 'all' credit hours for competing colleges. However, where licensing is concerned, there is something called 'reciprocity'. This is basically where one governing body accepts the certification credentials of another- provided that the quantity and *QUALITY* of the certification requirements are compatible to both entities: more legalize. With this in mind can your local training officer 'certify' firefighters? Once again, that answer is dependant on the legalize used in your area. In some areas, the respective state governing body has deemed certificated fire instructors capable of certifying other firefighters at different levels, perhaps a 'city certification', or even a 'state certification'. Even with this, the issue of reciprocity may come up. Personally, I have a bit of a problem with fire instructors certifying firefighters. There simply exists too much opportunity for *SELF INTEREST*. The individual providing the certification also does have a certain degree of *PERSONAL LIABILITY*. What I do not have a problem with, is for the instructor to teach the course in *PREPERATION* for certification by another independent body, such as IFSAC, AAEE, Department of Defense, etc, etc. For the vast majority of certification bodies, this is the manner in which they conduct business. *VERY FEW* actually teach the courses themselves. Instead, they conduct testing, etc., to ensure knowledge and capacity

of the individual seeking their certification.

So does certification of airport firefighters have a place in our world? With lives depending on firefighters abilities and competencies, I would certainly think there is. Every year, the FAA conducts certification inspections on all the Part 139 airports within the U.S. Apart of this inspection is to ensure Firefighter knowledge and capability. If firefighters were required to have current certification or licensing, wouldn't it also enhance the safety of the flying public and our fellow firefighters? Perhaps we should consider an annual certification as an airport firefighter, with annual or bi-annual checks and updates, similar to pilots and mechanics?

As always, there will be opponents to this. There will be those that say, "I don't need no stinking badges". I place those into the same category of people that say things like, "I used to take a bath in that chemical, and it never hurt me", where hazmat SOP's are concerned. Of course, a lot of those individual are now *DEAD*, perhaps from all those chemical baths, but whose to say.

Just keep a few thoughts in mind where airport firefighter certification is concerned:

- Obviously you don't have to become '*certified*' to do your job, but it doesn't hurt.
- You just might actually become more 'marketable.'
- Licensing or certification would lend a degree of professionalism to the job from others' point of view.

And, while speaking of professionalism...

**BE A PROFESSIONAL** and don't simply 'play-act' the part. I remember reading an article in a fire magazine, in which the statement was made: "*Train or go home.*" I couldn't agree more.